DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 317 PS 015 038

AUTHOR Bondi, Edith F.
TITLE Language in Childhood Song.
PUB DATE Feb 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Conference of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (San Francisco, CA, February 20-23, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; *Creative Activities; Creative Dramatics; Creative Writing; Diction; *Dictionaries; Grade 2; Music Education; Primary Education; Reading Skills; *Singing; *Vocabulary Development; *Vocabulary Skills; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Songs

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to design a strategy for teaching young children the information expressed in words of selected songs. Out of five classes of from 25 to 30 seven-year-old students, 86 students were selected for observation. The investigator chose 18 songs from a song textbook to be taught for the first 12 weeks of school. During the first 10 minutes of each school day, the investigator used a piano, chalkboard, and tape recorder to teach correct word pronunciation, enunciation, and vocabulary definition. (Each child had a textbook, dictionary, and notebook.) The words of the songs were pronounced by the teacher and students; read from the songbook, the chalkboard, and dictionary; and written in the notebooks. Words were always studied in song rhythm. Song words were discovered in other print sources and were used in original stories, poems, radio announcements, and field trip reports. Song words were replaced with new ones in the same melody. Children looked for root words, suffixes and prefixes, singular and plural forms, synonyms and antonyms, parts of speech, verb tenses, and language patterns in songs. By the end of the school year, all 18 songs were used in an operetta and dramatized for other classes. These activities and the techniques used to teach the songs had many observed benefits for the children. (CB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

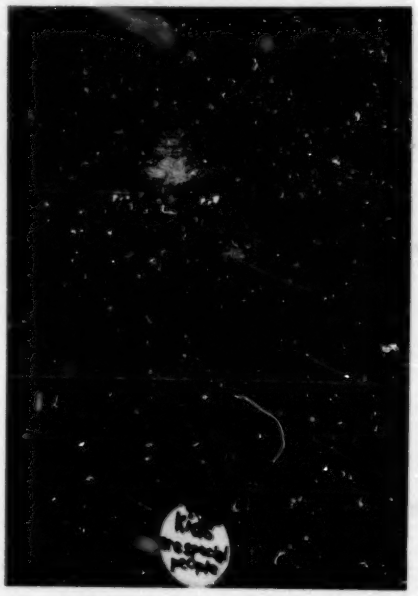
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED255317

LANGUAGE IN CHILDHOOD SONG

by Edith F. Bondi, Ph.D.

Dr. Bondi is a teacher, on leave of absence for independent research, from the Houston Independent School District, 1400 Herman Drive, Houston, Texas 77004.713/668-5885, and 713/667-5225.



"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Edith F. Bondi
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 015038

Abstract

LANGUAGE IN CHILDHOOD SONG

Family voices are children's first meetings with combinations of sounds and words. They may be music to the ears. Song is an art, a disciplined form of music in words. Information expressed in words of songs can be processed by questions. A structure for molding answers in children's minds provides the playground for a vast world of language enrichment.

Children with limited capacities benefit, particularly from a structured, early environment. Once they have mastered a framework they will use it as a basis for future explorations, in combination with emerging, personal capabilities.

This session will show how to take the child's concept of family voices—the child's first meeting with combinations of sounds and words -and mold them into expressive oral language. The literature of music is often ignored in both regular and special education elementary programs, and yet it lays the foundation for the shaping of first oral competencies—which ultimately lead to competencies in written language and the development of the whole child.

LANGUAGE IN CHILDHOOD SONG

The purpose of my study was to design a strategy for teaching information expressed in words of selected songs, to young children. It was time for a formal exploration of the language element, in song. I had observed children enjoying a song far beyond rhythm, companionship, group spirit, or music as an art form. This structure was to serve other teachers in presentations of songs to their students. It was aimed not only at those instructors who had a limited fund of musicianship, but at everyone who worked with regular, or unusual groups of youngsters, on any chronological age level. The language study brought language feeling to children and their teacher.

The time was August, 1978 through June, 1983, five school years of 36 weeks, each year. The place was the same, self-contained classroom of seven-year old children, for the entire period of time. With an average class enrollment of 25 to 30 students, yearly, randomly assigned by the Principal, my observations covered 86 different students, ranging from 10 students during year one, to 21 students during year five. For my observations, I selected the students according to their attendance pattern. Only those students with no tardiness and with two, one, or no absences were included in the study. This was important because I taught the songs during the first ten minutes, every morning. They were reinforced, many times, during the forthcoming weeks.

Songs were selected from the school curriculum, Texas State adopted song textbook,THE MAGIC OF MUSIC, BOOK TWO, Ginn & Co., 1970, Boston, Mass. 02117. The same 18 songs were studied, and observed, in the same order each Fall, before Thanksgiving, during the first twelve weeks of school. This meant 60 school days, or one-third of the school year.

The tools for my project consisted of a piano, chalkboard, taperecorder, and for each child and teacher, a book, THE MAGIC OF MUSIC, a personal notebook, with #2 pencil, and a dictionary.

Observation of the students was directed toward the language experience. Observation of the teacher was directed toward methods of teaching the songs for specific language learning experiences, in varying order, for each year. The focus was always on correct word pronunciation,on enunciation, and on vocabulary definition.

In order to show how children and teacher could capture, through structured interpretation, the message of each word, in any song, examples were found in the questions which I explored with the youngsters, in the songs: LITTLE BIRD ON MY WINDOW, page 126, with somewhat familiar words, small sound range, and finite rhythm,and in THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER, page 116, with intricate words, a very wide sound range, and an elaborate rhythm pattern."What is a bird?...a window?, ...a star?...spangled?...a banner?...dawn?...early light? ...hailed?" We had specific ways of sitting while we studied the songs. The words were pronounced by teacher and students, read from the book, the chalkboard and dictionary, and they were written in a notebook. We always studied the words in song rhythm. We discovered the song words in our Readers, in other literature, even in advertisements, radio and television. We noted that songs were poems. We prepared our own stories and poems with words from our songs. We wrote radio announcements and fieldtrip reports with song vocabulary. We replaced the song words with new ones: Instead of singing "Little Bird", we sang, "Little dog"."How much is that dog in the window?" was a popular song already half a century ago! We sang, "friendly bear in my window", or "friendly cow in the meadow, will you moo me a song?"

We looked for a root word, suffix, prefix, singular, plural, synonym, antonym, compound, present, past tense, noun, verb, and all other kinds of words, and language patterns in our songs. There were far-reaching consequences to the ear and eye-opening explorations because the children couldn't get enough of this word world. They carried ideas into neighborhoods and Houses of Worship. Fawns haunting houses with a light, became "by the dawn's early light", Oh, come, let's see the doorman, became "oh, come, let us adore Him". "Why do they sing 'crazy, crazy God?, asked one of my students. Several others confirmed that they sang that in their families, too. I answered, "Praise Ye, praise Ye, for we can share our blessings!" What is praise? It is the harvest of our good deed seeds that we have planted.

We placed all 18 songs into one operetta, by the end of the school year. Each year, the operetta took on a different theme since there were different children who developed it. We dramatized these song plays for other classes, and in the neighborhoods children produced them with their relatives and friends, in the same, as well as in new versions, but always singing the songs, correctly. It was peer tutoring at its best.

The strategy which emerged, for teaching information expressed in words of songs, to young children was the following:

1. I taught the song words with appropriate pronunciation and rhythm.
2. I played the music, and we learned to sing the song, with good enunciation, sound quality, and empathy.
3. Song text on hand, we studied the vocabulary for its definition in that particular song.
4. We dramatized the song, interpreting it with our five senses, without music, then with music.
5. I wrote the song words on the chalkboard, and the children copied them into their notebooks.
6. The song was ready for cheering, anywhere, everywhere, and as a springboard for more language in childhood song.

The language studies which the children experienced, by means of pronunciation, enunciation, and vocabulary definition, in song, were enlightening, and enriching for the following reasons:

1. The activities were joyful, and rewarding, because the children were active participants.

2.The correct understanding of words was impressed upon the children's minds.

3. The children became aware of things that they had never before observed.

4. The children learned to question the meanings of words although they thought that they had known their meanings,all along.

5. Many children had not grasped the meaning of a song, or of individual words in a song, and gave a thought to the song word meanings, for the first time.

6. The children learned to listen to their own words, and to question themselves whether they had understood them.

7. Curiosity was aroused in the children whenever they were not sure whether they should question what a word really meant.

8. The children learned how to help themselves, by studying the use of a dictionary, and spelling entered as a natural factor, in word study.

9. The children became aware of words and sentences, as sounds combined with rhythm.

10. The music that accompanied the words gave an additional dimension to the words.

11. It was brought to the children's attention that song words expressed the uses of their five senses.

12. Children always requested repetition, because repetition reinforced memory, especially in song. Therefore, the children memorized words, and sentences, and wove them into all parts of their daily language needs.

ORDER IN WHICH I TAUGHT THE SONGS, FOR 5 CONSECUTIVE YEARS
August 1978 through June 1983

Page numbers refer to the school curriculum, Texas State adopted song textbook, THE MAGIC OF MUSIC, BOOK TWO, Ginn & Co., 1970, Boston, Mass. 02117

1. Little Bird on My Window, page 126
   Words: Edith Krohner, Music: German Folk Melody
2. The Star Spangled Banner, page 116
   Francis Scott Key, John Stafford Smith
3. March of the Little Flags, page 9
   Adapted by H.G.W., Olga B. Pohlmann
4. My Little Red Drum, page 10
   Both Ena B. Knippel
5. The Wake-Up Clock, page 128
   Both Graham Haswell
6. The Bus, page 153 Authors unknown
7. Bake A Cherry Pie, page 156
   Katherine S. Bolt, French Folk Melody
8. The Elves' Joyful Eve, page 98
   Translated by Ruth Esther Hillilo, Wilhelm Sefve
9. Little Sir Echo, page 50
   Laura R. Smith, J.S. Fearis, Adele Girard, Joe Marsala
10. Thank You, page 91 Unknown Author, Franz Schubert
11. Pumpkin Face, page 88 George Deal, Ruth Stapp
12. America, the Beautiful, page 114
    Katherine Lee Bates, Samuel A. Ward
13. The Happy River, page 21 L.B.P., French Folk Melody
14. It's So Nice, On the Ice Both Richard M & Robert B. Sherman
15. Little April Shower, page 75
    Larry Morey, Frank Churchill
16. If You Can't Say Something Nice, page 70
    Richard M, and Robert B. Sherman
17. How Do You Do Today? page 148
    Carol Davis, Italian Folk Melody
18. Spring Song, page 82
    Larry Morey, Frank Churchill

EXTRA LANGUAGE INFORMATION

See the Little Ducklings, page 22 German Folk Song:

See the little ducklings, swimming here and there
Heads down in the water, tails up in the air.

The information is incorrect. The verb should be, FLOATING, because ducklings do not swim while they have their heads in the water, and their tails up.

Moonlight, pages 20 and 34. Helen Taylor, French Folk Melody:

The words are the same, on both pages, but page 20 is in the key of C, and page 34 is in the key of F. On page 20, composer Carl Orff (1895-) indicates that the fixed do, in the music alphabet is C. On page 34, composer Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) indicates that the wandering do varies with the song key, in the music alphabet.

America page 115 Samuel Francis Smith, Traditional Song:

Thee is an old, poetic word, meaning, You, and 'tis is an abbreviation for, it is.